



Connecticut  
Early Childhood  
Alliance

**Testimony before the Select Committee on Children Committee  
Re: S.B. 273 – An Act Concerning the Care4Kids Program  
Submitted by Maggie Adair, Executive Director  
Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance  
Tuesday, March 6, 2012**

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Good afternoon, Senator Gerrantana, Representative Urban, and members of the Select Committee on Children. I am Maggie Adair, Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance (Alliance). The Alliance is a statewide advocacy and membership organization committed to improving outcomes for all children, birth to age eight, in the areas of early learning, health, safety, and economic security.

The Alliance supports *S.B. 273 – An Act Concerning the Care4Kids Program*. This bill: 1) expands the category of minor parents eligible for Care4Kids; 2) extends the eligibility period for women who are on maternity leave; 3) extends the eligibility period for parents who lose their job and are seeking re-employment; and 4) phases in an increase in reimbursement rates up to federal guidelines by 2022.

**Minor Teen Parents**

This bill provision would help keep minor parents enrolled in a high school program by excluding their parents' income when calculating eligibility for Care4Kids assistance. Under current regulations, when a minor teen parent lives with their own parents, their parents' income is taken into account, and often, the teen parent is therefore not eligible for Care4Kids. As a result, the teen may need to drop out of high school to care for the child due to the high cost of child care. Worse, the teen could leave their parents' home in order to qualify for Care4Kids, leading to couch-surfing and an unstable housing situation.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, pregnancy and birth are significant contributors to high school dropout rates among teens. This provision of the bill would prevent young parents from dropping out of high school, thus lowering the high school drop-out rate and giving the teen parent a better chance for future success. Expanding Care4Kids to this relatively small population would support fragile young parents and keep them in school. This provision would also allow a very young child of a teen parent access to quality early care and education and a safe and nurturing environment. In addition, the teen parents can learn important information about child development from their early care provider, and be linked up to other community-based resources.



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2001 market rates. As required, Connecticut does conduct a market rate survey, but does not implement the finding of the market rate survey.

Raising rates addresses both quality and access. With increased rates, families will have more choice and access to quality child care, and providers will be better able to attract, pay and retain staff. According to the Connecticut Department of Labor, child care workers are among the lowest paid workers in the state. It is alarming that we pay workers such a low wage to take on one of the most important jobs: care for and preparing young children for school and life-long success. Raising rates would increase the wages of early care professionals, which goes hand in hand with new requirements that early care professionals meet degree standards as passed in *P.A. 11-54 – An Act Concerning Requirements for Early Childhood Educators*.

The Alliance acknowledges the considerable cost of raising Care4Kids rates to the federal recommendations. Therefore, the bill phases in the rate increases over the next 10 years. We strongly support the bill provision that allocates the scheduled \$6.8 million increase for FY13 as a first down payment to increase provider rates, expand access, and increase quality.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify.